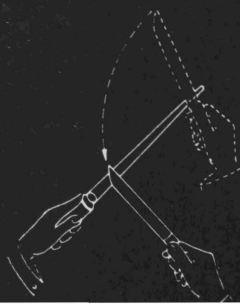
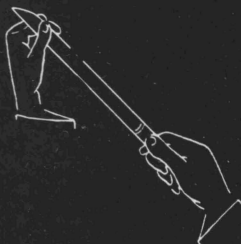
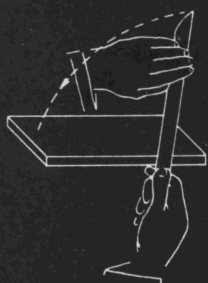
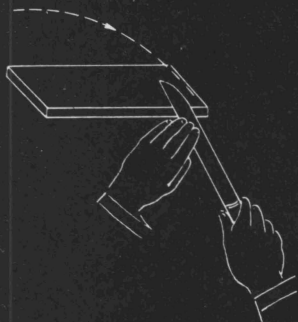
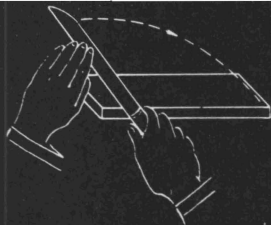


# KEEPING KNIVES SHARP

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G. G. Gibson, Director, College Station, Texas

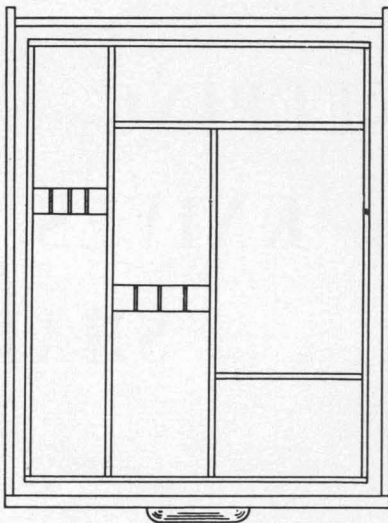


# KEEPING KNIVES SHARP

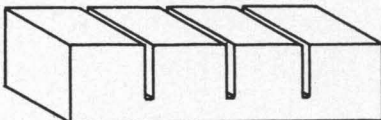
By  
Extension Home Management Specialists  
and  
Extension Foods and Nutrition Specialists  
Texas A. and M. College System

Sharp knives save the homemaker much time and labor and enable her to do a better job of preparing food for the family meals. Sharp knives are especially important for cutting either raw or cooked meat.

## CARE OF KNIVES



Insets may divide the drawer space for knives and small utensils.



Inset in the drawer for knives.

Proper care of knives will do much to prevent dull edges. Knives may be kept in a drawer to protect the edges from becoming nicked and dulled. A wall pocket made of leather with a division for each knife is convenient to use for small knives or a leather strip tacked on the wall may serve the same purpose.

Knives should be thoroughly clean and dry before they are put away. If a knife is to be stored very long without being used, the blade should be coated with heavy oil, paraffin or lard to prevent rusting. If lard is used, be sure it is free from salt.

Knives should always be used for the purpose intended—a bread knife for bread, or a meat knife for meat. Never use a knife to cut wire, tin cans, kindling wood, boxes and other hard materials. A knife should not be used as a screw driver or to pry open a lid. A knife may be broken by using it for heavier work than was intended.

A cutting board should be used to protect a knife. The edge of a knife blade can easily be damaged if used to cut directly on a metal, porcelain or an earthenware surface.

Do not let a knife soak in water, because water rusts the blade, rots the wood and loosens the handle. Never place a knife on a hot stove

or put it in hot grease, because heat destroys the temper of the blade and of course burns the handle.

Handles should be kept tight. If a handle wears out, and the blade is still good, replace the old handle with a new one before the blade is ruined.

## HOW TO SHARPEN KNIVES

### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

#### A Sharpening Stone:

A carborundum is a satisfactory sharpening stone. It may be a combination sharpening stone with coarse grit on one side and fine on the other. The side with the coarse grit is used to grind the **longer** bevel on the knife, and the fine grit is to finish the process. Keep the stone in a covered box or wrapped in cellophane.

There is also a carborundum in the shape of a steel called a carborundum stick which serves well for ordinary household sharpening. It is used very much as the steel is used, which is described on page 5, Figure 4.

A grindstone or an emery wheel is also a good type of knife sharpener. A convenient size for household use is a wheel about six inches in diameter and at least one inch thick which can be fastened to a table. If either of these is used, the blade must not be

held on the grinder too long or with too much pressure because the heat may remove the temper.

#### A Steel:

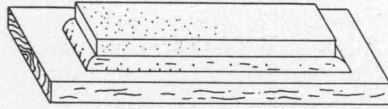
A ten-inch butcher's steel is inexpensive and aids in making a smooth cutting edge on a knife of good steel. A smooth steel is best when it is used in combination with a stone. A ridged or file steel is used alone as a sharpener, but is not quite as effective as the stone and steel. A steel with a protector helps to prevent cutting one's thumb.

#### Other Sharpeners:

Many of the small patent knife sharpeners on the market sharpen easily and quickly, but remove tiny chips or fine shavings from the face of the knife. These patent sharpeners are more suitable for use on a poorer quality of steel, but should not be used on good knives. Never use the edge of crocks or stone steps to sharpen knives as this tears the metal edges.

### Other Material for Sharpening:

Equipment other than steel and stone needed in sharpening would be light oil for the stone, a device to hold the stone steady, and a cloth to wipe steel shavings or dust from the stone or knife. A good device for holding the stone steady may be made similar to this illustration.



Stone steady device.

### STEPS IN SHARPENING WITH CARBORUNDUM STONE AND STEEL

#### Preparation of the Stone

1. Make the stone steady. Use device as illustrated for holding the stone steady or put it on a damp cloth on the table.
2. Wipe the stone with a clean cloth.
3. Apply several drops of light machine oil. A carborundum works best when kept moist with oil.

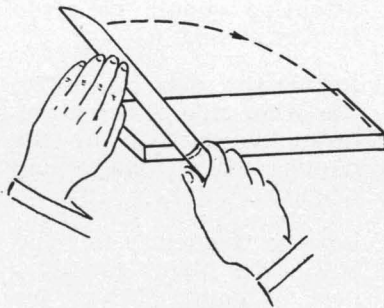


Fig. 1

#### Use of the Carborundum Stone

1. Use the coarse side first, then the fine side. Place the heel of the knife on the left-hand side of the stone. The blade should be held at a fairly flat position—about a 15 to 20 degree angle—so as to get a thin edge rather than a chisel edge (Figure 1).
2. Draw the knife along the stone from heel to tip in a single stroke. The cutting edge always leads when

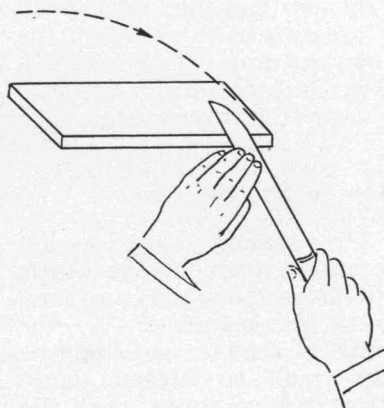


Fig. 2

sharpening. All strokes should be made with the knife at the same angle with the stone in order to obtain a flat bevel. Any increase in the angle tends to round the bevel and to prevent a keen edge.

3. As the point is approached, lift the handle of the knife somewhat in order to keep the edge angle the same. (Figure 2). The point end of the knife does most of the work, therefore special attention should be given to sharpening it.

4. Repeat the same process on the other side of the knife. Note the position of the hands while sharpening (Figure 3).

5. Reverse frequently to grind both sides about equally—heel to point. When the edge is approaching the desired sharpness, turn the stone and finish grinding on the fine side. Use plenty of oil and not too much pressure at this stage of the sharpening. If the edge is ground too thin, it will curl over into a wire edge.

### How to Use the Steel

The smooth steel doesn't actually sharpen the knife but is used to add the final touch of keenness. As the knife is used in cutting, the edge may be turned somewhat. The edge may be straightened by using the

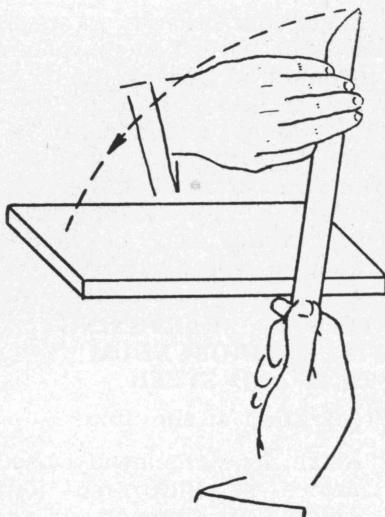


Fig. 3

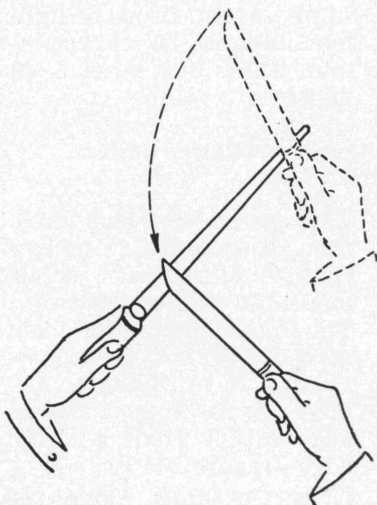


Fig. 4



steel occasionally without re-sharpening it on the stone each time.

Hold the steel in the left hand and the knife in the right hand. The heel of the knife should be about an inch from the tip of the steel (Figure 4). In using the steel the knife is held at an angle of

about 45 degrees instead of 15 or 20 degrees as with the stone. Pull the knife downward first on one side then on the other. Notice the arc that the knife point follows. The right hand does not change position. The knife is pulled down over the steel by the pivoting of the wrist.

**Acknowledgment:** Assistance was given by R. W. Snyder, Extension Meats Specialist, Texas A. and M. College System.